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THE HEATHER IN NEW ENGLAND.

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ON the twenty-fourth of September, 1899, the writer, happening to be in Tewksbury, Mass., visited the location of the Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*, Salisb.), and it may be desirable to put on record the present condition of this interesting plant as well as some observations on the vexed question of its origin.

Contrary to our usual experience in such matters, no difficulty was met with in finding the place where it grew, so well was the plant known in the town.

It grows upon a hillside pasture sloping gradually down to boggy ground through which a deep channel has been cut by a brook. In the higher part of this pasture a few scattered patches of the plant were noticed, possibly transplanted from the main body of the Heather, and from their feeble appearance seemingly doomed to early extinction. The principal growth was in the lower part of the pasture, on the borders of the brook, where the plants were growing quite thickly in a space about thirty feet square, which was inclosed by a wire fence. At the time of our visit a cow was standing in the midst of the precious shrubs, an invasion not likely to be soon repeated, for visiting the place a second time, some two weeks later, we found the fence had been repaired, showing the watchful care of some interested person over this rare plant. The shrubs were mostly in advanced fruit, although a few of their pretty rose-colored flowers still lingered as a sample of its beauty a month before.

In the thirty-eight years which have elapsed since public attention was first called to the Heather in this locality, the area of its growth has been much reduced, judging from the description published at the

time, and that it is still in existence is doubtless due to the protection which has been afforded it. Since its discovery here several other stations have been found for the Heather in New England. It has been reported from Cape Elizabeth, Maine, from West Andover, Townsend, and Nantucket, Massachusetts, and also from Rhode Island.

In most of these locations careful investigation has failed to prove its introduction by human agency and this has led numerous writers on the subject to claim for it an indigenous origin. Although its early history in New England is shrouded in obscurity, and desirable as it would be to place the Heather on our list of native plants, it must be said, after a careful reading of the literature of the subject, that no satisfactory evidence has accumulated during the years that have passed since its discovery on this continent to substantiate its claim as a plant native to America.

The circumstance that in some instances, as at Townsend, Massachusetts, it has been traced to the planting of seed, and especially the fact that although many wild regions in America seem favorable for its development it has never been found at points remote from human habitation, are much against the theory of its indigenous character.

The occurrence of the Heather in Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and Greenland has been adduced as strong evidence in favor of believing the plant native in America. But Nova Scotia was settled in part by Scotch, who would have been particularly likely to introduce the Heather accidentally if not purposely; while in Newfoundland — a region of great stretches of open moorland and seemingly an ideal habitat for the Heather, — the plant has only been found in a few patches about the settlements on the southeastern coast, the most thickly populated part of the island. Finally the occurrence in Greenland, although reported, could not be confirmed by Lange, the author of the most complete flora of that region. It will thus be seen that these northern occurrences add little to the evidence, that the Heather is an indigenous American plant.